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INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7751
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 7991
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4018
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2544
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 004821

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: MGPK01: SITREP 18, AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD: REACTIONS
TO MUSHARRAF'S PRESS CONFERENCE; MORE ARRESTS

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Some opposition parties threatened to boycott elections if they are held under a state of emergency. All media covered the Secretary's Sunday talk shows comments on Pakistan. The Attorney General predicted the Supreme Court would begin hearing the case on Musharraf's re-election on November 13 and hoped they would file a verdict by the weekend. Protests continue throughout the country, with several hundred mostly Pakistan People's Party (PPP) members arrested in Karachi and Peshawar. Bhutto and the PPP continue with plans for the "long march," scheduled for November 13 from Lahore to Islamabad. The government in Karachi seized a transmitter for a popular FM radio station. Human rights advocate Jahangir spoke out against the proposed amendment to the Army Act. Mission offices continue to operate normally. End summary.

Various Official Reactions to Election Announcement/Army Act
Modification

¶2. (U) Speaking to the press, Benazir Bhutto said Musharraf's announcement that elections would be held before January 9 was positive, but it alone will not defuse the current political crisis in Pakistan. Citing the lack of a timetable on when the emergency will end and the Army Act amendment, Bhutto said it will be very difficult to hold transparent elections. Bhutto avoided answering questions pertaining to any possible boycott by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of the upcoming elections, but she did urge all parts of society to participate in her anticipated "long march" from Lahore to Islamabad, scheduled for November 13.

¶3. (C) Because of the current state of emergency, three political parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N), Jamaat-i Islami (JI) and the Pakistan Tehrik-i Insaaf (PTI), announced on November 9 in a press release their plans to boycott the elections. In a separate statement, the religious block of parties, Muttahida Majlis-i Amal (MMA), said elections could not take place under the emergency and demanded the immediate restoration of the constitution.

¶4. (U) Former Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry rejected the allegations made against him by President Musharraf in his November 10 press conference. Chaudhry questioned the existence of any evidence against him and charged Musharraf with not wanting an independent judiciary.

¶5. (U) Asma Jahangir, the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, condemned the change to the Army Act, which now allows for civilians to be tried in military tribunals. Still detained, Asma said that this change now allowed for civilians to face unusually severe penalties for crimes ranging from libel to murder and said the amendment further demonstrated the GOP's lack of faith in the judiciary. The GOP claims the amendment will only be used to address the problem of the courts releasing suspected terrorists who were detained without charge.

¶6. (C) The Attorney General told the press November 10 that Musharraf's election eligibility case that was scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court today will not be heard until November 14 because the bench does not have the necessary 11 justices at this time. However, the Court will hear the initial opening of a challenge of the state of emergency, filed by Tikka Iqbal Khan, the former Food Minister in Punjab, with an eight-justice bench.

Consulate Reports

¶7. (U) Several PPP demonstrations took place on November 11, including a "black day" in Sindh that resulted in approximately 300 arrests; a PPP-led attempt to block the national highway in Hyderabad; a demonstration in Dadu over the Bhutto detention that resulted in 100 arrested and 4 wounded; and several others in Larkana, Nawabshah, Mithi, Thatta, Khairpur, Shikarpur, and Nauhsarhro Feroze where many arrests were made and tires were burned. Several people were

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reportedly injured when police used batons and tear gas to prevent a rally at the Karachi Press Club.

¶8. (U) Consulate received reports that the government had forcibly removed the broadcast transmitted for the Mast FM 103 Radio Network. To date, the very-popular station has not received any official notice as to why this action took place, but the station does have a contract with BBC Urdu Services, through which FM 103 runs BBC news bulletins. (At this time, BBC is still off the televised air due to the GOP belief that it is broadcasting anti-government messages and has not agreed to the new media Code of Conduct.)

¶9. (U) Peshawar: A bomb explosion at an internet cafe in Peshawar's old city left one injured as militants continued to drive their activities they deem to be "un-Islamic."

¶10. (U) On November 11, Small demonstrations were reported in Khyber, Bajaur, and Bannu, and Shah Farman, the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) leader of PTI, was reportedly placed under house arrest following a small demonstration.

¶11. (U) Today, Peshawar lawyers plan to protest before the High Court, PML-Q activists plan to gather at the Peshawar Press Club to protest the suicide bombing on November 9 which killed former NWFP provincial minister Pir Muhammad Khan, and JI announced that they would be holding a rally in Peshawar on November 13.

PATTERSON